



Editor's Note: Our monthly newsletter "FHCC News" has permanently changed its name to "The Apollo." The new name not only reflects the heroic history of Captain Lovell, but is appropriately associated in Greek mythology with medicine and healing. Follow The Apollo and other federal health care center information at facebook.com/lovellfhcc and twitter.com/lovellfhcc. Send your feedback to fhcc.feedback@va.gov.



CAPT James A. Lovell, Apollo 13 astronaut and retired naval officer, stands next to the Illinois Tollway sign bearing his name Mar. 3. On Oct. 1, 2010, the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center will be the nation's first integrated federal health care center. (Photo by Jonathan Friedman)

Illinois Tollway signs in place for nation's first federal health care center

Astronaut CAPT James A. Lovell on hand to see namesake signs placed

By Jonathan Friedman
NCVAMC Public Affairs

CAPT James A. Lovell, Apollo 13 astronaut and retired naval officer, was on hand Mar. 3 with Patrick L. Sullivan, North Chicago VA Medical Center Director, and employees of Illinois Tollway to commemorate the placement of new tollway signs in honor of Lovell.

The large directional signs were placed in both directions of the I-94 Illinois Tollway at IL-137 (Buckley Rd.). The signs direct drivers to the "Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center," which is the first federal health care center in the nation.

"I'm honored and humbled to have the new health care center named after me," said Lovell.

"It's amazing to see the signs going up, and I'm very excited just to be part of this first-of-its kind initiative."

Lovell and Sullivan took commemorative photos with the signs at the Lake Forest Oasis, just prior to the Illinois Tollway erecting the signs at their final destination.

"It's a privilege to honor an American hero like CAPT Lovell," said Sullivan. "Seeing the tollway signs being put into place is another reminder that our integration is moving forward and that the new face of federal health care will soon be part of our landscape."

Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes renews national medical accreditation

By Jonathan Friedman
NCVAMC Public Affairs

The Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes officially renewed and hung their Joint Commission certifications Mar. 10 at the Quarterdeck of their facility.

The accreditations, which were awarded to the clinic October 2009, are nationally recognized as the standard of healthcare excellence.

"Our Joint Commission certifications are truly a reflection of our staff's dedication to our patients," said CAPT Thomas McGue, Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes Commanding Officer. "We are committed to continuously improving our services and maintaining the best quality and safe patient care."

According to the Joint Commission's Web site, the organization is an independent, non-profit that accredits and certifies more than 17,000 health care organizations and programs in the nation.



CAPT Thomas McGue, Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes Commanding Officer, reviews the Joint Commission certifications Mar. 10 at the Quarterdeck of the facility. (Photo by Mary Waterman)

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Leadership Commentary

Achieving optimal Force Health Protection must be priority

Seeking opportunities in training and medical readiness needs to remain a focus for our operational mission



CAPT Thomas E. McGue,
Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes CO

This is a changing and challenging time to be part of this organization!

Our many accomplishments in 2009 were a direct reflection of an extraordinary commitment to the delivery of quality

healthcare here and abroad. Highlighted by our successful support of operational deployments, the exceptional quality of our care was acknowledged during the combined Joint Commission (JC) and medical Inspector General (IG) surveys.

At a command level, we often fixate on the major measures of quality and productivity. Although these measures lack personal recognition, we realize that collectively they represent a superior team effort at the deckplates. Please accept my personal thanks for the hard work that resulted in so many improvements throughout the command.

Now that the survey is behind

“To be ready, we have to be unrelenting in our efforts to achieve optimal Force Health Protection.”

- CAPT Thomas E. McGue

maximize their medical readiness while encouraging a healthy lifestyle that promotes physical conditioning and mental alertness.

us, and the holidays have passed, we need to prevent apathy within our product lines. Most importantly, we need to seek opportunities to improve the Force Health Protection of our staff and other Sailors departing Great Lakes for duty in operational settings. To be ready, we have to be unrelenting in our efforts to achieve optimal Force Health Protection.

For our Sailors, that means we must continuously train to keep our operational skills sharp. For the Sailors and Marines entrusted in our care, we need to

I challenge every staff member to contribute to this endeavor through personal conditioning efforts that reinforce this message at every opportunity.

Captain Lovell FHCC leadership identified

VA and Navy leadership chart provided to staff at Captain’s Call and Townhalls

By Jonathan Friedman
NCVAMC Public Affairs

The leadership for the nation’s first federal health care center was provided to VA and Navy staff members during March 2010 Captain’s Calls and Townhall meetings.

The Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center will have six directorates, which are headed by Associate Directors and Assistant Directors. The directorates include Patient Care, Fleet Medicine, Patient Services, Facility Support, Resources and Dental.

In addition to the directorates, there are several positions that directly report to either the Director or

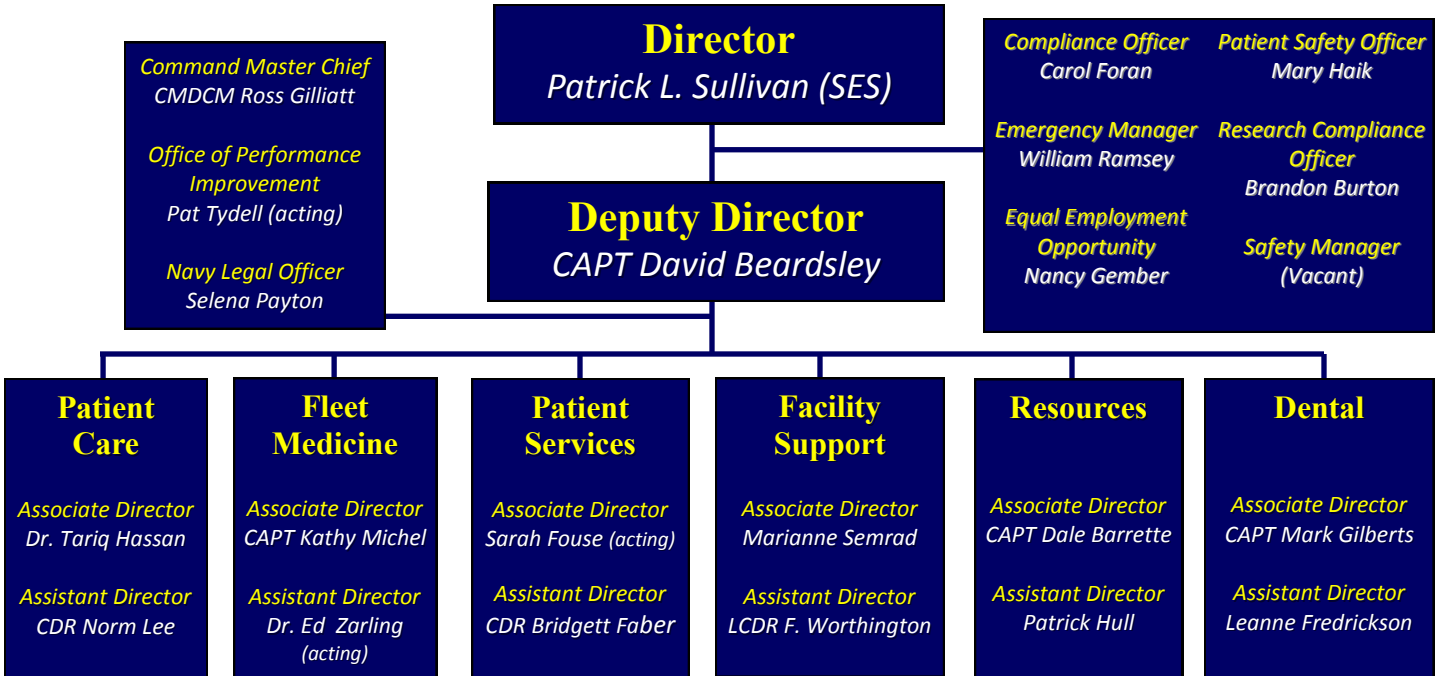
Deputy Director. These positions include the Command Master Chief, Compliance Officer, Emergency Manager, Equal Employment Opportunity, Patient Safety Officer, Research Compliance Officer, Safety Manager, Office of Performance Improvement and Navy Legal Officer.

The “Promise Kept” and logo for the new federal health care center was also described at the meetings: *Readying Warriors and Caring for Heroes*. The phrase is a promise made to each patient seen at the health care center.

The leadership model outlined at



the meetings will stand up Oct. 1, 2010, when the Captain James A. Lovell Federal Health Care Center becomes America’s first fully-integrated VA/DoD establishment.



The Apollo

North Chicago VA Medical Center
Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes

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VA doctor returns from Haiti mission

Anesthesiologist brings unique skills to Haitian people in need



(second from right) Dr. Alison Murray, North Chicago VA Medical Center anesthesiologist, assists with surgery Feb. 17 in Haiti with flashlight assistance from 82nd Airborne Division soldiers. (Courtesy photo)

By Jonathan Friedman
NCVAMC Public Affairs

Dr. Alison Murray, North Chicago VA Medical Center anesthesiologist, recently returned from a humanitarian mission in Haiti, attached to a Disaster Medical Assistance Team (DMAT) from New Mexico, Massachusetts, Texas and Oregon.

Murray, a resident of Highland Park, Ill., volunteered to be part of the Veteran Health Administration’s Disaster Emergency Medical Personnel System, otherwise known as DEMPS. The system maintains specific information about volunteer medical staff in the event of a disaster and a request for federal assistance.

“We were surrounded by more than 35,000 Haitians there,” said Murray. “While I was there, six babies were born and our team saw people everyday who were injured during and after the earthquake. It was really an amazing experience.”

Donna Gonzalez, North Chicago VA Medical Center DEMPS Coordinator, received a request from the national and regional DEMPS program managers requesting an anesthesiologist.

“It’s a very complicated selection process,” said Gonzalez, a resident of Twin Lakes, Wis. “In this instance, the volunteer anesthesiologist needed to have at least a tourist passport, a VA travel credit card, specific immunizations and medical clearance, and be able to leave on very short notice.”

Before leaving, Murray explained that she simply wanted to do the most good in the short amount of time she was in the country. She noted that she was not nervous or excited for the trip, but more anxious to get there and help.

Since returning, she explained that the experience in Haiti was amazing. “We made it through another 4.7-magnitude earthquake while I was there,” she said. “Even through that, our patients were always wonderful, always grateful, and willing to wait hours. Honestly, I don’t remember hearing them complain once.”

Remembering the experience, Murray made it clear that her team made all the difference. “My DMAT team was absolutely fantastic,” she said. “The entire team came together under third-world conditions. There were no egos on the team, and the Haitian people were clearly thankful for our help.”

North Chicago VA volunteers hydrate residents through innovative program

“Hydration Project” brings camaraderie to volunteers and residents

By Jonathan Friedman
NCVAMC Public Affairs

For nearly a year, a group of volunteers at the North Chicago VA Medical Center have been serving water to patients at the Community Living Center (CLC) through an initiative called the “Hydration Project.” While the seven-person group is certainly helping to hydrate those people they meet, the volunteers are quick to point out that the visits are larger than just providing water.

“When I retired from the phone company about a year ago, I really just wanted to help Veterans,” said Bob Crouch, North Chicago VA Medical Center Volunteer and U.S. Army Veteran. “I see it as another way to serve my country.”

Crouch explained that the project allows him the opportunity to hear stories from many years ago. “This is much more than just delivering water, although that’s pretty important too,” he said. “It’s about hearing their stories -- and they all have amazing stories to tell. The first time I went up there, I really felt like I was going back in time with their stories. I know that we’re there to deliver water, but I get wrapped up in their stories.”

By working shifts, the group is able to cover the project every Monday through Friday. Crouch is quick to point out that the project would never have been possible without the leadership of Pam Hrabak, North Chicago VA Medical Center Speech Pathologist.



North Chicago VA Medical Center Volunteer Bob Crouch brings water to U.S. Air Force Veteran Adriane Burke as part of the “Hydration Project.” Crouch and six other volunteers deliver water to residents at the North Chicago VA Medical Center’s Community Living Center. (Photo by Jonathan Friedman)

“We saw a need to increase patient hydration, and knew that we had fantastic volunteers, so making the connection was easy,” said Hrabak. “The idea was to supplement the nursing staff by having the volunteers pass water pitchers to every patient in the CLC. What we didn’t anticipate was that the socializing would be such a large part of it.”

U.S. Air Force Veteran Adriane Burke, who is a skilled artist, explained that while the delivery of the water certainly reminds her to hydrate, the conversations with the team are just as important to her. “When they come visit me, I just know we’re going to have a great chat,” she said.

For Crouch, he summarized the experience for him in a single sentence: “Every person in the CLC is an American hero to me, and it’s a privilege to go up there.”

Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes celebrates Black History Month

Annual observance highlighted history of black economic empowerment



(from left) CSC Leon Brown, Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes Patient Administration, discusses the invention of the traffic light with HM1 Alonzo Talbert, Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes Patient Administration, and HM2 Martha Harrigan, Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes Diversity Committee Secretary, during the celebration of Black History Month at Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes Feb. 19.

By HM1 A. Sheila Biag
NHCGL Media Coordinator

The Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes’ newly-formed Special Emphasis/Diversity Committee hosted a luncheon in observance of Black History Month Feb. 19. The event focused on the history and economic impact of inventions and patents by African Americans,

and included the use of presentations and food to better understand the culture and embrace diversity.

“We owe it to ourselves and those who will follow in our footsteps to continually understand those black Americans who made history, who served against all odds, and who laid the foundation for the diverse and powerful country we have today,” said CAPT Thomas McGue, Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes Commanding Officer and event guest speaker.

Each year, Black History Month is developed around a particular theme honoring this distinct portion of America’s past. This year’s theme was “The History of Black Economic Empowerment.”

More than 150 staff members from the clinic joined the festivities and sampled a large number of African American cuisines while learning about some distinguished accomplishments of African Americans, including the inventions of the traffic light, clothes dryer, peanut butter and “Super Soaker” water gun.

“It is important to observe Black History Month because America would not be the America it is today without the efforts and achievements of African Americans,” said HN Yuj Vang, Naval Health Clinic Great Lakes Pharmacy Technician.

Cultural Transformation brings changes

By Sean Gartland
NCVAMC Supervisory Recreation Therapist

The North Chicago VA Medical Center’s Community Living Center (CLC) is undergoing a transformation of culture in a move away from the traditional nursing home model and more towards a new way of doing things. This new approach is built on the notion that the attitude of staff and residents towards their environment contributes to well-being and positive outcomes of care.

“We are striving to create a ‘home-like atmosphere’ which fosters respect, empowerment, relationships, choice and community, the principles of culture transformation,” said Dr. Jan Clarke, North Chicago VA Medical Center Chief of Geriatrics and Extended Care. “These principles of culture transformation extend to Veterans and staff alike.”

Clarke explained that residents are encouraged to be as independent as possible. They are provided a variety of choices in their daily lifestyle; these choices can range from what to eat for dinner to which activities to attend during the day.

“One of our main goals is to provide as many different options to residents as possible,” said Karen Fleming, North Chicago VA Medical Center Recreation Therapist. “When people live at home, they can choose from a variety of things to do in their free time. Since this is their home, we want that to continue.”

Fleming noted that the culture transformation team is comprised of representatives from several disciplines who are seeking to foster transformation among both the residents and staff of the CLC. The team meets monthly to discuss new methods and ideas of transformation.

“We try to both educate and motivate the residents and staff on the importance of culture transformation,” said Mary Gollings, North Chicago VA Medical Center Social Worker. “We’re part of a larger effort with both the Veterans Integrated Service Network and the national teams to implement change across the VA.”

Gollings, who is also the co-chair of the Culture Transformation Team, noted that the goal of care is to restore the resident to maximum function, prevent further decline, maximize independence, and/or provide comfort when dying. She explained that most VA Community Living Centers are well suited to providing short-term, restorative and rehabilitative care and longer-term care for Veterans who meet eligibility criteria.

“We have an outstanding nursing team which is dedicated to providing the highest quality care for our Veterans,” said Pamela Sanberg, RN Associate Chief Nurse of Geriatrics and Extended Care. “Our staff not only takes care of the physical needs of residents, but the emotional needs, as well. They really have a personal relationship with residents and care about them as people.”

Telehealth offers patients technological solutions to traditional medical visits

Healthcare alternative brings ease to care between visits

By Pamala Sanberg
NCVAMC Associate Chief Nurse,
Geriatrics and Extended Care

In an era when everything from shopping to entertainment is catered to the needs of the consumer, medical care is falling in line with services that relate to the specific needs of the patient. While there are many names for these types of progressive care, one of the programs offered at the North Chicago VA Medical Center is called Telehealth.

The program, offered for patients through the Home and Community Based Services, provides care coordination services via a computer and telephone line. According to Mary Schatz, Telehealth Registered Nurse, the program is becoming a popular alternative to traditional physician office visits.

“Most of the people I’m working with are patients who can truly benefit from this,” she said. “Essentially, these are the patients who are caring for long-term, chronic diseases, and I’m the nurse monitoring their progress at home.”

Telehealth provides medical-monitoring services through distant review of information such as blood pressure or blood sugar results sent from the patient’s home to the medical center. This service not only reduces the amount of travel required to see a primary care provider, but it provides an instant link of information for review by medical professionals.

“Telehealth puts the patient in control of their medical care,” said Schatz. “They can stay in the comfort of their homes and have direct contact with a registered nurse familiar with their situation. It is not just the patient and the machine. There is always a voice and face associated with it. We are ready to speak with

the patient regarding their progress and provide that personalized care.”

Qualified patients are provided VA-purchased equipment and are educated on the process. Schatz noted that many patients using Telehealth are monitoring chronic diseases such as diabetes, congestive heart failure and mental health illnesses. Along with the Telehealth nurses, the patients develop an understanding of the symptoms and behaviors specific to their medical condition.

Schatz explained that not every patient can use the technology, either due to their condition or by choice, but those who do typically find it to be a great alternative to routine medical center visits.

Patients interested in the Telehealth option can find more information at www.carecoordination.va.gov/telehealth. If interested, patients should contact their primary care physician to discuss their health monitoring options and to see if they are qualified for the program.



Mary Schatz, North Chicago VA Medical Center Telehealth Registered Nurse, demonstrates the Telehealth “ViTel Net” touch screen that patients would use in their homes. Schatz monitors patients’ vital signs each day as part of their Telehealth care between medical center visits. (Photo by Jonathan Friedman)

Creative Arts Festival big hit at VA

Veterans show off talents and compete at annual festival for top honors



(from left) Veterans Johnnie Walker and Alan Davis perform at the 2010 Creative Arts Festival Mar. 4 at the North Chicago VA Medical Center. (Photo by David Roth)

By Kenny List
NCVAMC Communications

The 2010 Creative Arts Festival was held at the North Chicago VA Medical Center Mar. 4 and was comprised of an art exhibition and live performances. The two-hour

show featured 12 acts, including a music category that had soloists, a cappella and group performances. There were also many moving performances in the creative writing and drama categories.

A total of 28 art pieces were displayed in a large variety of categories. Each group was judged for the top three awards. Each first-place winner in all of the music and art categories is entered in the national competition of the Creative Arts Festival.

The event was coordinated by Patricia Moore and Christine Krumsee. It also would not have been possible without outstanding volunteers like Carl Petersen, David Roth, Colleen Jen, Eileen Feingold, Greg Grace, Raye Luskin and Mary Neely.

The American Legion Auxiliary sponsored the refreshments, as well as assisting the American Red Cross volunteers with escorting Veterans to the show.